DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 437 452 UD 033 240

AUTHOR	Warren, Constancia
TITLE	Evaluation of the New York City Beacons. Summary of Phase I Findings.
INSTITUTION	Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC.; Chicago Univ., IL. Chapin Hall Center for Children.; City Univ. of New York, NY. Hunter Coll.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	16p.; "With Prudence Brown and Nicholas Freudenberg."
AVAILABLE FROM	Academy for Educational Development, 1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20009-5721. Tel: 202-884-8000; Fax: 202-884-8400; e-mail: admindc@aed.org
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Attitudes; Adolescents; Outreach Programs; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; Program Development; Program Evaluation; *School Community Programs; School Community Relationship; Secondary Education; Student Attitudes; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	New York City Board of Education

ABSTRACT

This report presents findings from Phase 1 of an evaluation of the New York City Beacons initiative, a model of school-community-family partnerships initiated in 1991. Beacons are community centers located in public schools, offering a range of activities and services to participants of all ages, before and after school, in the evenings, and on weekends. Phase 1 involved analyzing the development and evolution of the Beacons initiative and investigating how the Beacon concept has been transformed into action at individual sites. It included two rounds of site visits to 39 Beacons, focus groups with parents, a participant survey, and brief intercept interviews with youth. The site visits included interviews with Beacon staff members, lead agency supervisors, and school principals. The citywide creators and administrators of the Beacons were also interviewed. Findings indicate that neighborhood schools are now open for long hours, offering a variety of activities and services to community residents. There is variation across the 39 Beacons. Most have strong or exemplary programs in one or two areas and acceptable implementation overall. A few have implemented programs that fully develop the Beacon concept potential, and a few are struggling to implement appropriate programs. Findings are discussed in terms of patterns of participation, youth development programs, academic support and enrichment activities, and parent and family involvement and support. (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 437 452

Evaluation of the New York City Beacons

SUMMARY OF PHASE 1 FINDINGS

Constancia Warren, Ph.D.
With Prudence Brown, Ph.D. and Nicholas Freudenberg, DrPH

UD033240

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Archer
AED

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

AED
Academy for Educational Development

EVALUATION
of the
NEW YORK CITY BEACONS

Summary of Phase I Findings

Constancia Warren, Ph.D.
with
Prudence Brown, Ph.D. and Nicholas Freudenberg, DrPH

Academy for Educational Development, Inc.
with
Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago
Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs and Community Health

1999

What People Say About the Beacons...

There was nothing in our community before the Beacon. There was a lot of violence and alcohol and drug abuse and people would be getting in trouble and hanging around. Once the Beacon opened, people came and started participating. It was the first time we had somewhere to go. *(Beacon youth)*

The Beacon and I have the same goals: safety, education and reaching out to empower the community. *(Beacon adult)*

The motto that it takes a village to raise a child—well, the Bronx is the proof. The village of the Bronx is coming together here. *(Beacon adult)*

For me, the best thing is actually getting to a young person who's given up on life and opening the doors and letting them know that they're important. *(Beacon staff member)*

The Beacon has created a violence-free space in the community. Kids are very safe here. It is a refuge for everyone. *(Beacon adult)*

The Beacon helped me be more open about how I feel and control my attitude. *(Beacon youth)*

I haven't seen another program like this. It's right here, with Hispanics and African-Americans running it, and we don't have to travel downtown for it. *(Beacon adult)*

Those of us in the Beacon know each other now on the streets. That's a big change—recognizing one another and our kids. *(Beacon adult)*

The biggest thrill comes from seeing the youth succeed. We plant a seed and know that somewhere trees are now growing. *(Beacon staff member)*

The Beacon makes learning fun and exciting. They've gone through so many books in the literacy program. My son is now getting 100s and reading on his own, even reading to me. *(Beacon adult)*

OVERVIEW

This summary report presents the findings of an evaluation of the New York City Beacons initiative, a complex and ambitious model of school-community-family partnerships initiated in 1991. Beacons are community centers located in public school buildings, offering a range of activities and services to participants of all ages, before and after school, in the evenings, and on the weekend. The initiative is funded by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). The Beacons, with current funding at $36 million, is the largest municipally funded youth initiative in the United States.

The New York City administration initiated the Beacons in 1991 with $5 million of municipal Safe Streets, Safe Cities funding. The initiative originally enabled 10 community-based not-for-profit agencies to create school-based community centers as "safe havens" providing "safe, structured, supervised activities for children, youth and families"[1] in selected New York City neighborhoods. By 1998, the initiative had expanded to 40 Beacons and one "mini-site" (with 50% funding), and served more than 76,000 youth and 33,000 adults.[2] Over time, Beacons gained an increasingly broad base of political support and legitimacy as a focal point for neighborhood improvement efforts. In 1998, the New York City government doubled the initiative's funding. There are currently 76 Beacons, and each site receives a base grant of $450,000. Four additional sites will be funded in the coming year.

Individual Beacons are managed by community-based organizations and work collaboratively with school boards, their host schools, community advisory councils, and a wide range of neighborhood organizations and institutions. Individual Beacons offer children, youth, and adults a wide range of recreational, social service, educational enrichment, and vocational activities. Many Beacons also take an active role in the community by sponsoring activities—voter registration drives, cleanups, and cultural events and celebrations—to make the community a better place to live.

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) of the Fund for the City of New York has provided ongoing support and technical assistance to the Beacons since shortly after the initiative's inception to help staff articulate the vision of the Beacons and make it a reality. YDI's assistance has included monthly meetings of Beacon directors; professional development activities for Beacon directors and staff; linkages to resources, such as funding and staff training opportunities; advocacy with public agencies to foster collaborative relationships with the Beacons; and grants to help individual Beacons develop in specific areas.

[1] *First Request for Proposals to Operate School-Based Community Centers*, New York City Department of Youth Services, 1991.

[2] New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, FY 1998 annual totals of Beacon monthly participation reports.

THE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the Beacons seeks to provide information and insights to help improve the initiative as a whole and individual Beacon programs in New York City. It also seeks to inform decision-making regarding the initiative and efforts to implement Beacons in other cities. It is a collaborative effort of the Academy for Educational Development, the Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs and Community Health, and the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

The evaluation is being conducted in two phases. Phase I comprised an analysis of the development and evolution of the Beacons initiative and an implementation study documenting and analyzing how the Beacon concept has been transformed into action at individual Beacon sites. Conducted in fall 1997 and spring 1998, it included two rounds of site visits to the 39 Beacons operating in 1997–98, focus groups with parents, a participant survey, and brief intercept—short, on-the-spot—interviews with youth. The site visits included interviews with numerous Beacon staff members as well as the lead agency supervisors and principals in the host schools. In addition, evaluation staff conducted focus groups with adult participants and observations of the Beacon environment and activities. Finally, evaluators interviewed the citywide creators and administrators of the Beacons. During Phase II, an outcome study in six Beacon sites will evaluate how the initiative has affected youth and their parents, the host schools, and the surrounding communities.

The remainder of this summary report presents major Phase I findings, highlighting the accomplishments of the Beacons as well as issues requiring more attention. However, a few comments are in order to situate these findings in the context of the challenges facing the evaluation of complex community initiatives.

First, some variation in the breadth of implementation is to be expected when studying an initiative as complex and ambitious as the New York City Beacons. Several different "cohorts" of Beacons were included in this study—some that have been in operation since 1991 and others that started as recently as 1996. Some lead agencies had substantial prior experience in several core areas addressed by the Beacons, while others, though considered strong enough to be awarded the contract, had considerably more to learn about how to run a Beacon.

Second, all four focal areas of Beacon work—youth development programming, academic support and enrichment activities, parent involvement and family support, and neighborhood safety and community building—are emerging fields in which there are not yet clear objective measures to evaluate program quality. Third, the purpose of this phase of the evaluation was to obtain a cross-site view of patterns of implementation, not to judge the quality of individual Beacons. (The next phase of the evaluation, as noted above, will study the operation of six sites and enable evaluators to examine the relationship between program characteristics and outcomes and to develop guidelines for making future judgments about program quality.)

Finally, although there are a few Beacons that need more improvement than others to make full use of the potential of the Beacon concept, we saw nothing that suggested fundamental flaws in the Beacon vision or in the capacity of community-based organizations to make this vision a reality.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section summarizes findings in terms of patterns of participation and the four core areas of Beacon programming, as stated above: youth development; academic support and enrichment activities; supports for parent involvement and family support; and neighborhood safety and community building.

1. Patterns of Participation

The Beacons serve large numbers of youth and adults. In FY 1998, DYCD data showed that more than 77,000 youth (up to age 21) and 36,000 adults participated in the 40 existing Beacons and one mini-Beacon. To take a statistical "snapshot" of who participates at the Beacon, how often, and how long they have been attending, evaluators surveyed every participant who used the Beacons on two different days during the study. A total of 7,406 participants filled out the survey.

Accomplishments

✔ **Beacons attract participants of all ages.** According to the participant survey, 24% of participants are under 12 years old; 24% are between the ages of 12 and 14; 25% are between 15 and 18; 7% are between 19 and 21; and 20% are over 21 years old.

✔ **Many participants attend Beacons frequently.** Almost a third (30%) of participants surveyed reported attending between five and eight times in the previous two-week period, and almost half (45%) reported attending more than eight times in that same period.

✔ **Substantial proportions of adolescents participate over several years.** Well over a third of participants (38% of 12–14-year-olds, 42% of 15–18-year-olds, and 37% of 19–21-year-olds) have been involved in the Beacon for at least three years. Approximately one-quarter have participated for at least four years (22% of 12–14-year-olds, 27% of 15–18-year-olds, and 28% of 19–21-year-olds). These figures compare favorably with those for some of the most respected youth-serving programs given in a national study. [3]

Areas needing additional attention

➔ **Number of teens at some Beacons before 6 p.m.** While Beacon adolescents make up more than 50% of the overall population, in some sites teens do not arrive in large numbers until after 6 p.m. This occurs for several reasons, which include teens' competing external commitments, school policies, and Beacon programming for teens. To reduce barriers to teens' earlier participation at the Beacons and protect them during the high-risk hours between the end of school and their parents' arrival home, two issues merit additional attention.

- ***Policies barring presence of older youth while younger children are on site:*** Several schools or school districts specifically bar the presence of older youth while elementary school–age children are on site. In these cases, the schools should explore structures that permit young people of all ages to participate at the same time.

[3] M. A. Gambone and A. J. Arberton, *Safe Havens.* Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1997.

- *More activities for teens during late afternoon:* Some Beacons do not offer enough attractive programs for teens at earlier hours. The Beacons need to develop more engaging programs to attract larger numbers of teens during the late afternoon.

➔ **Decline in participation of older girls.** The participant survey showed that while girls and boys younger than 12 attend in equal proportions, among 15–18-year-olds and 19–21-year-olds, boys outnumber girls by a two-to-one ratio. Beacons need to continue, and expand, their current efforts to develop programs that appeal to and retain older girls.

2. Youth Development Programming

The architects of the Beacons believed that youth programs should build on young people's strengths and foster their resiliency, viewing them as resources in their own development rather than as "problems to be solved." YDI, which provides ongoing technical assistance to the Beacons, focuses substantial attention on promoting positive youth development practices, which seek to provide youth with opportunities to (1) develop caring and trusting relationships, (2) participate in stimulating and engaging activities, (3) benefit from a continuity of adult support, (4) be challenged to grow by high expectations, and (5) connect with and contribute to their communities.

Accomplishments

✔ **Youth activities and programs at most Beacons are consistent with the core tenets of youth development practice.**

- *A safe place:* The Beacons have clearly created a safe place for youth: the vast majority of youth (85%) reported that it was "always true" or "mostly true" that they felt safe at the Beacons.

- *A diverse array of activities:* Beacons provide a diverse array of activities for youth of different ages, ranging from basketball and karate to chess and computer instruction; conflict-resolution training to designing a skit for a peace vigil; and from newspaper production to leadership development. In almost three-quarters (73%) of Beacons, youth are also involved in organizing and carrying out activities and events.

- *Consistently interesting and engaging activities:* Evaluators who observed more than 100 activity sessions, using detailed guidelines, judged that the participants appeared to be both engaged by and interested in their activities in at least 90% of activities.

- *High expectations:* In two-thirds (68%) of the sessions observed, staff encouraged youth to ask questions, and in three-quarters of activity sessions, staff gave young people feedback on their ideas (78%) and challenged youth to examine their thinking (74%).

- *Multiple opportunities to learn leadership skills:* Almost all Beacons (89%) have a youth council; 86% involve youth as volunteers within the Beacon; and 76% engage youth as paid program and administrative staff.

- *Community service activities:* Close to three-fifths of Beacons (57%) involve young people in a diverse array of community service activities, at least once monthly.

- *Experienced staff:* Beacons engage and retain experienced staff to work with youth. More than three-quarters (76%) of Beacon staff have more than three years' experience working with youth, and almost half (46%) have worked at the Beacons for more than three years. This staff longevity, unusual in the field of youth services, gives Beacon participants the opportunity to build close and lasting relationships with staff.

✔ **Beacons help youth avoid negative behaviors.**

- *Drug use:* Four-fifths of youth (80%) who took part in intercept interviews described the Beacon as either "very helpful"or "pretty helpful" in helping them avoid drug use.

- *Fighting:* Three-quarters (74%) of youth interviewed said that the Beacon was either very helpful or pretty helpful in helping them avoid fighting.

✔ **Beacons help youth develop positive behaviors and practices.**

- *Help in school:* Three-quarters (75%) of youth interviewed said the Beacon was either very helpful or pretty helpful in helping them do better in school.

- *Fostering leadership:* Almost three-quarters (72%) said the Beacon was very helpful or pretty helpful in helping them learn to be a leader.

- *Opportunities for volunteering:* Three-fifths (59%) said the Beacon was very helpful or pretty helpful in providing opportunities to volunteer in the community.

Areas needing additional attention

➔ **More attention to incorporating youth development activities and principles into informal activities.** In some sites, even apparently informal activities incorporate youth development principles, while at some Beacons, informal activities for adolescents appear to offer little more than a safe place to congregate or play. Without compromising young people's access to informal activities, more effort is needed by some Beacons to incorporate youth development practices so that the time adolescents spend at the Beacon truly supports their development.

3. Academic Support and Enrichment Activities

The Beacons' afterschool activities include those designed to support and enhance participants' education. YDI's technical assistance in this area has included workshops and staff training to help Beacons develop educational enrichment opportunities, as well as a handbook on literacy-based afterschool programming and grants to enable Beacons to undertake thematically based youth activities. A special focus of YDI's technical assistance has been the use of themes for framing literacy activities.

Accomplishments

✔ **Extensive homework help.** The Beacons' educational support activities provide thousands of elementary and middle school students with the opportunity to complete their homework in a quiet environment with additional support from adults, often professional staff. Nearly all Beacons (92%) offer homework help, and more than half (58%) also offer individual tutoring when needed.

✔ **Educational enrichment activities that help develop new skills and capacities.** Almost all the Beacons (95%) offer other kinds of educational enrichment activities beyond homework help. These activities enable young people to learn new skills and experience themselves as capable learners in settings other than school. In three-quarters of the Beacons, participants can join reading groups (76%) or engage in writing projects (73%), including creative writing and student publications, such as a community newspaper researched and written by youth. More than half the Beacons (56%) reported organizing their academic activities around themes.

✔ **Contact with schools and families on academic issues.** Two-thirds of Beacons reported reviewing students' school report cards and test scores, and roughly half the Beacons reported that their staff prepared periodic written assessments of student progress to share with parents. More than half of Beacons reported some form of communication between their staff and participants' classroom teachers.

Areas needing additional attention

→ **More attention in some Beacons to educational enrichment.** In the small proportion of Beacons where educational programs are limited to little more than homework assistance, more attention is needed to develop a broader array of educational enrichment activities that stimulate and challenge participants and help them discover their own learning capacities.

→ **More contact with school staff.** While it was encouraging that more than half the Beacons reported communication between their academic staff and the participants' daytime teachers, more communication between Beacon staff and classroom teachers would be useful in the remaining Beacons. This will require effort on the part of both Beacon and school staff.

4. Parent and Family Involvement and Support

As neighborhood centers, the Beacons offer activities and services for parents and other adults as well as activities for children and youth. In many Beacons, activities reflect requests of parents in response to Beacon-conducted surveys. In focus-group discussions with over 225 parents and other community members, participants described the tremendous positive impact of the Beacons on their lives and that of their children as well as on their communities and schools. In addition, the Beacon has provided space to community organizations to offer additional activities and services.

Accomplishments

✔ **An array of adult activities.** Most Beacons offer parents and other community adults a variety of classes and activities that respond to their particular interests and needs. The three areas attracting substantial numbers of adult participants are educational activities, sports and recreational activities, and culturally specific programming.

✔ **Adult education.** Adult education opportunities at the Beacon, which can be found in nine out of 10 sites (87%), are anchored by programs offered in cooperation with the New York City Board of Education, including GED preparatory classes and basic literacy and ESL classes.

✔ **Support for parental employment.** Many focus-group participants testified to the importance of the Beacon's provision of free afterschool child care in allowing them to work or continue their education or employment training. Many female participants indicated that without the Beacon, they would be forced to leave their employment, since their wages were insufficient to afford babysitting. Participants also described the peace of mind of knowing that their children were not home alone but were receiving help with schoolwork and were involved in safe activities after school.

✔ **Opportunities to volunteer.** Three-quarters of Beacons (74%) reported using adult volunteers. Several parents in the focus groups reported that their volunteer commitments led to employment at the Beacon. Even adults working at the Beacon without pay reported that the opportunity to volunteer contributed to their feeling closer to their children and more connected to the neighborhood.

✔ **Intergenerational activities.** Most Beacons offer regular intergenerational activities and events to bring families together, often in the context of wider community celebrations. Three-quarters of Beacons (76%) reported holding intergenerational activities at least several times a year, and almost one in four Beacons (24%) reported including these activities on a continuing basis. Some Beacons also offer parent-child computer classes.

✔ **Support for families.** Two-thirds (67%) of Beacons provide specific support to parents, either through parent counseling or parent support groups. In 16 sites (40%), Beacons provide support to families struggling with social and emotional problems through the inclusion of preventive service programs under the authority of the Administration for Children's Services. The integration of these foster-care prevention programs into the Beacons is consistent with leading policy in this area, which seeks to place these services at the community level and within community-based organizations.

✔ **Immigrant services.** Beacons in neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants have developed services and activities specifically tailored to these new residents. These activities seek to help immigrants become a part of their new communities as well as maintain ties to their cultures. Several sites offer workshops on naturalization and related legal issues.

Areas needing additional attention

→ **Reaching more parents.** As noted above, most Beacons offer a wide range of activities and services for parents and other adults as well as a variety of intergenerational activities to attract the parents of Beacon youth. Many Beacons are doing an admirable job of reaching parents and providing services that have a direct positive impact on their lives. In some communities, however, the Beacons, like other institutions, have difficulty overcoming parents' reluctance to come into the school building. Several sites have developed creative strategies for encouraging more regular parental participation in the Beacon; other sites would benefit by developing similar strategies to address the barriers to broader parent participation.

→ **Increased male participation.** Among adult participants, women appear to outnumber men by large margins. Currently, most men come for sports, but focus-group participants (mainly women) suggested that more men might come if other kinds of activities were also offered.

5. Neighborhood Safety and Community Building

Many Beacons have become "safe havens" and serve as a site for organizing a range of community improvement efforts. Through their neighborhood-focused activities, many Beacons have created a sense of common interest and a stronger web of relationships among residents, Beacon staff, community service providers, and other neighborhood leaders.

Accomplishments

✔ **Improved security.** Beacons provide a protected location within the community by working with local police to patrol the area and by organizing neighborhood activities designed to reduce threats to community safety. One-third of the Beacons (33%) have secured additional police surveillance for the area around the Beacon; and two-fifths (39%) have arranged to have younger participants escorted from their schools to the Beacon in the afternoon. In addition, a small number of Beacons—five sites—provide escorts to take participants home at night.

✔ **A base for community problem-solving.** Most Beacons provide an organizational base for fostering community dialogue and problem-solving—for example, Beacon members' participating in community board meetings or working to close an active incinerator in the neighborhood.

✔ **Community service activities.** Many Beacons engage local residents in community service activities designed to improve the neighborhood, such as advocating with the parks department to renovate a public park or conducting a graffiti "paint-out." Almost three-fifths of Beacons (57%) reported involving youth in community service on at least a monthly basis, and one-third (32%) reported involving adults this frequently.

✔ **Family and community events.** Special Beacon-sponsored family and community events (e.g., a community Thanksgiving dinner, music and dance performances by youth) attract large groups across generations and cultures.

Areas needing additional attention

→ **More active community advisory councils.** In some Beacons, the community advisory council is inactive or plays a very limited role in supporting the Beacon and linking it to the surrounding neighborhood. Beacons with no functioning community advisory council need to organize one, as specified in the DYCD contracts; Beacons with inactive community advisory councils need to focus more attention on organizing and sustaining active community participation in the Beacon.

→ **Increased community-oriented activities.** In those Beacons with tenuous connections to the surrounding community, more attention is needed to develop activities that reach out into the surrounding neighborhood. Based on the experience of Beacons with stronger community connections, these activities are likely to bring more people into the Beacon and strengthen its contribution to the lives of both the neighborhood and individual Beacon participants.

OTHER IMPORTANT FINDINGS

- **Beacon-school relationships.** The mechanics and politics of sharing space has been the most difficult issue in the relationship between Beacons and their host schools. However, despite some tension between Beacon directors and principals over space issues, most have forged good working relationships: almost three-fifths of directors (59%) reported such relationships with the host school, with over a third (35%) reporting a "friendly working partnership" with the principal of the host school and nearly one-quarter (24%) reporting "cordial communication." However, four Beacons still lack access to rooms appropriate for private counseling sessions, and six Beacons have such small quarters that the lack of storage space has limited their ability to purchase equipment for their programs.

- **Health and health-related services.** Many Beacons have made connections with neighborhood resources and mobilized community institutions to offer an array of health and health-related services and activities, often in partnership with community providers. Almost three-quarters of the Beacons (72%) offer substance abuse prevention activities; more than half (56%) offer drug counseling; and almost a third (31%) have on-site self-help groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. More than two-thirds of Beacons offer sex education (74%) and pregnancy and HIV prevention programs (69%). More than one-quarter (28%) offer health services on site, and over two-fifths (44%) offer mental health services on site. More than three-quarters (77%) provide referrals for health or mental health services.

- **The role of the Youth Development Institute.** The evaluation findings confirm the substantial contribution to the Beacons initiative made by YDI's ongoing technical assistance. Two-thirds (66%) of directors reported attending most YDI meetings and almost three-fifths (59%) reported participating in YDI professional development activities. Two-thirds (68%) of directors also reported frequently sending staff to training opportunities arranged by YDI. Almost all directors (95%) had positive views of YDI's assistance, with 57% describing it as essential to the success of the Beacons initiative and 38% describing it as very helpful.

- **Ongoing city support.** The New York City Beacons provides an excellent example of the "scaling up" of a targeted initiative to a comprehensive neighborhood improvement program. Crucial to this scaling up was the ongoing leadership and support, financial and otherwise, provided by New York City government under two administrations. This support not only provided funds to allow the initiative to quadruple in size; it also sent an important message to local-level practitioners about the importance of the initiative and the city's substantial commitment to developing the capacity of community-based organizations to provide opportunities for youth development and to address local community needs. What began as an ambitious and comprehensive initiative in 10 sites became institutionalized in city policy, with its own assistant commissioner, as one of the major ways that the city helps youth, families, and neighborhoods thrive.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the New York City Beacons initiative has largely lived up to the expectations of its architects. Neighborhood schools are now open evenings, weekends, and during the summer, and Beacons in these schools offer a rich and abundant variety of activities and services to residents of the surrounding community. Understandably, there is variation across the 39 Beacons studied as part of the first phase of the New York City Beacons evaluation. A small number of sites have implemented programs that fully develop the potential of the Beacon concept; the large majority have strong or exemplary programs in one or two areas and acceptable implementation overall; and a few sites are struggling to implement programs consistent with the rich conceptual Beacons framework. In some areas, Beacons have acknowledged the need for improvement and are working to strengthen their programs, and other areas are being addressed by the ongoing technical support provided by YDI and DYCD. Despite these variations, evaluation findings provide abundant evidence of the important role that Beacons are playing in many communities in New York City. As one parent so eloquently stated, "The Beacon is an oasis in this desert."

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) is a nonprofit educational evaluation and technical assistance organization committed to addressing human development and educational needs in the United States and throughout the world. AED's School and Community Services department has a strong commitment to excellence and equity in education and to developing links between schools, families, and community-based organizations to increase educational and employment opportunities for youth across the United States. We work with schools, school systems, families, and community-based organizations on comprehensive school and community improvement initiatives, as well as programs addressing specific issues, such as HIV/AIDS education, educational reform, family involvement in education, school-to-work transition, gender equity, adolescent pregnancy prevention, and teen parenting. We design, implement, and evaluate model educational programs; provide technical assistance to schools and school districts; and disseminate information on issues relevant to youth through conferences, seminars, and publications. School and Community Services' main office is located in New York City.

The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago is an independent policy research center, the mission of which is to bring sound information, rigorous analyses, and innovative ideas to the debate about policies and practices affecting children and the families and communities in which they live. Chapin Hall is a national leader in policy and programming for youth and community development. **The Hunter College Center on AIDS, Drugs and Community Health of the City University of New York** has worked extensively with community-based organizations and schools in New York City to promote the health and well-being of adolescents. The center has assisted community organizations, schools, and health and social service agencies to plan, implement, and evaluate interventions designed to improve the well-being of New York City's poorest neighborhoods.

AED Board of Directors

Sol M. Linowitz, *Honorary Chairman of the Board*
Cassandra A. Pyle, *Chairman of the Board*
John Diebold, *Chairman of the Executive Committee and Vice Chairman of the Board*
Joseph S. Iseman, *Secretary of the Corporation*
Stephen F. Moseley, *President and Chief Executive Officer*

Robert O. Anderson
Barbara B. Blum
Roberta N. Clarke
Alonzo A. Crim
Harriet Mayor Fulbright
Ivan L. Head
Frederick S. Humphries
Walter F. Leavell
F. David Mathews
Sheila Avrin McLean
Edward W. Russell
Paul Simon
Alfred Sommer
Niara Sudarkasa
Alexander B. Trowbridge

Emeritus Members of the Board

Marie Davis Gadsden
Joseph E. Slater
Willard Wirtz

Academy for Educational Development
New York, New York

AED

Academy for Educational Development

Principal Offices:

1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009-5721
Tel: (202) 884-8000
Fax: (202) 884-8400
Internet: ADMINDC@AED.ORG

100 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011
Tel: (212) 243-1110
Fax: (212) 627-0407
Internet: ADMINNY@AED.ORG

www.aed.org

BEST COPY AVAILABLE